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Section: Calendar

'Nemo' sets trend for DVDs to outpace theatrical grosses
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Times Staff Writer

With sales of DVDs this year expected to reach nearly 642 million units, up from 5.5 million in 1997, it's not exactly news that video revenues outstrip theatrical box office for most movies. But amid the continuing video boom fueled by the growth of the DVD market, Disney/Pixar's " Finding Nemo " offers a dramatic illustration.

Combined DVD and VHS sales for the first two weeks of the computer-animated "Nemo" came to 20 million units, according to Disney's home video division, about 75% of which were DVDs. Average retail prices for the movie were between \$18 and \$20, which translates to between \$360 million and \$400 million, well ahead of the movie's theatrical gross of about \$340 million.

"Nemo" is now the biggest-selling initial-run DVD, with 15 million units sold in its first two weeks, according to Buena Vista Home Video. The previous DVD record was the 14.5 million units sold of "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring." In VHS, "Fellowship" sold an additional 3 million units, and a special edition DVD added 2.1 million more units.

In terms of overall home-video numbers, however, the pre-DVD era's "The Lion King" remains the king, with 32 million units sold in its original release. "Titanic" is No. 2 with 27 million.

By comparison, "Shrek," another computer-animated film, which grossed nearly \$268 million in theaters during its 2001 release, has sold roughly 25 million video units since last year, according to industrywide figures. With the same average retail range, that would come to between \$450 million and \$500 million additional sales for the DreamWorks movie.

The next-best figures are for another Disney/Pixar film, "Toy Story II," which sold 23.1 million units after its video release in 2000.

The success of "Nemo" bodes well for the special edition of "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers," which goes on sale today, as well as holiday-season buying overall. Earlier versions of "Two Towers" have sold more than 10 million DVD units.

Coming weeks will see the video releases of three more of the year's highest-

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grossing theatrical movies: "X2: X-Men United," "Bruce Almighty" and "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl."

----- INDEX REFERENCES -----

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